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c.3 Illinois
Rou R. Blagojevich, Governor



Illinois Department of Healthcare
and Family Services
Barry S. Maram, Director

H.O.P.E.

Hospital Opportunity for Paternity Establishment

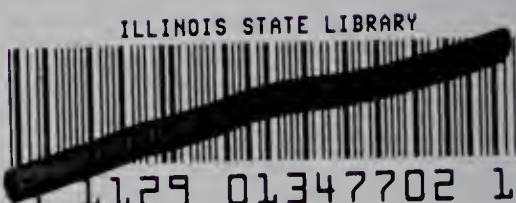


Division of Child Support Enforcement



Take that extra step . . .

- If you were not married at the time your child was born, and you want to establish paternity and put the father's name on the birth certificate.
- To establish legal paternity (paternity means fatherhood) for your baby. Both you and the baby's natural father sign a voluntary acknowledgment of paternity form naming him as the father. The form must be signed in front of a witness.
- By signing the form before you leave the hospital with your new baby. However, you can also mail it in later. Please follow the directions on the form.



H.O.P.E. can last a lifetime



The H.O.P.E. program exists because legal paternity is important to every child and to both parents. There are many reasons why your baby should have a legal father.

- All children have a right to know that they belong to both their mother and father.
- All children living with only one parent may need medical and financial support and may get it from their fathers if legal paternity has been established.
- Your child may need medical information from both parents for the best chance at a healthy life.
- If your child's father is disabled or dies, your child could be eligible to receive Social Security benefits, pensions, veteran's benefits, life insurance, and inheritance rights, if paternity has been established.

What if I wait?

Now is the best time to take that extra step and act to voluntarily establish legal paternity. Fathers who voluntarily support their children when they are babies are more likely to continue to give both emotional and financial support during their children's growing years.

If you don't take this step before you leave the hospital, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, local registrars or county clerks throughout the state will help you establish legal paternity for your new baby or any other children. Free services are available to any parent in Illinois whether or not they receive public assistance. Some community sites may also help.



H.O.P.E. could be the best gift you ever give your baby

Give your baby the gift of H.O.P.E.



Toys and baby clothes cost money, but this gift is free. Take the first step toward giving your newborn baby a legal father before you leave the hospital.



All you and the baby's father need to do is fill out the Voluntary Acknowledgment of Paternity and sign it in front of a witness.

The form will be given to you in the hospital, along with more information about H.O.P.E. (Hospital Opportunity for Paternity Establishment).



For unmarried parents:

If your child was born before August 9, 1996, the father's name on the birth certificate does not make him the the legal father unless paternity has been established.

A verbal explanation of parents' rights and responsibilities when establishing paternity is given by hospital staff, and is also available by calling:

Child Support Customer Service Center
1-800-447-4278
TTY (1-800-526-5812)

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